A SOCIAL CONTRACT ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE YOUTH

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INTRODUCTION

This project aims to develop and test an innovative analytical tool that can help our understanding of the structure and dynamics of social contracts in fragile and conflict-affected countries. A specific focus on "youth"[1] (aged between 15 and 24) is envisioned for this tool, as a way to limit the otherwise much wider focus of the exercise, but also in order to address the specific concerns and demands of a social group that is often overlooked in programmatic work and policy formulation in the areas of political governance and representation, and state-society relations.

Following the example of other political-economy-inspired analytical frameworks, such as state-society or governance assessments, the tool will be structured around three main sets of questions. A first group of broad, meta-level questions will look at the fundamental components of a country's social contract(s). Then the analysis will focus on more targeted, context-specific questions that look into the specific characteristics of a country's social contract(s) and into the position of youth and their expectations within this/these contract(s). The last group of questions will focus on the micro level, i.e. the concerns of individual youth members of a society and their interactions with or expectations of a specific social contract.

The ultimate purpose of the analytical framework is to stimulate youth's participation in political decision-making in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, and to facilitate international actors' provision of support to these nationally owned and led processes. Ideally, a broader analytical framework should be eventually developed to address nation-wide issues affecting the participation of excluded groups, including women and minorities, in the establishment of a sustainable social contract.

In terms of its applicability, it is clear that as it stands, this instrument is exclusively meant for English-speaking users. To increase the possibility of using it beyond this often-limited target group, and thereby to collect the opinions of respondents outside main urban contexts, it is recommended that its implementation allows for the translation of at least its most relevant sets of questions either orally during roundtable and focus group discussions or in a written form through the circulation of surveys and questionnaires.

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[1] As defined in UN General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General*, A/36/215, 19 June 1981, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/21539.

Box 1: Definition of a social contract

The term "social contract" refers to processes by which everyone in a political community, either explicitly or tacitly, consents to state authority, thereby limiting some of her or his freedoms, in exchange for the state's protection and security, and for the adequate provision of public goods and services. This agreement calls for individuals and societal groups to comply with the state's laws, rules, and practices in pursuit of broader common goals, such as security or protection, and basic services. In open democratic systems, a social contract is truly complete when the state allows for the meaningful participation of all citizens in its political decision-making processes. The validity and legitimacy of a social contract may be gauged by the extent to which it creates and maintains an equilibrium between society's expectations and obligations and those of state authorities and institutions, all amidst a context of constant flux.

With some small adjustments, taken from NOREF and UNDP, *Engaged Societies, Responsive States: The Social Contract in Situations of Conflict and Fragility*, Concept Note, 2016, p. 9, https://noref.no/Publications/Themes/Peacebuilding-and-mediation/Engaged-societies-responsive-states-The-Social-Contract-in-situations-of-conflict-and-fragility.

THE FRAMEWORK

The framework presented below is not quantitative in nature, and does not rely on indicators for statistical computing. Instead it tries to garner informed opinions and perceptions about the kind of social contract that may be present in a given country. In the development of the framework, an effort has been made to include key aspects of an ideal social contract, which have been distributed among the three main sets of questions referred to above and laid out below.

Within each of the three sets, questions have been lightly clustered according to their subject. An effort has also been made to create a logical flow in the way in which these questions and their clusters follow one another. However, users of the framework should feel free to move from one question or from one cluster to another according to their understanding of which topics represent priorities in the context they are trying to analyse.

The framework should therefore not be used as a rigid or "compulsory" list of questions. Rather, it should be approached as a menu of possible choices that focus on those questions that are most relevant to the context being analysed. Occasionally, similar questions return in the three sets. However, while the topic in question might be roughly the same, they have a different scope and respond to a different level of analysis.

I. Fundamental Components of a Social Contract

The first set of clustered questions looks at those components that have emerged through the history of state formation and have shaped a particular state's relations with its society. Such components tend to change very slowly and are therefore often beyond the immediate influence of reform efforts. However, it is always important to bear them in mind, because they represent the foundations on which a social contract has been historically built, and many of the challenges it currently faces lead back to them.

This first group of questions therefore focuses on the structural components of an existing social contract, its possible shortcomings, and the main reasons for its absence altogether.

The level of analysis represented by these questions does not necessarily require a participative approach or any fieldwork, and could be carried out mainly through desk research based on secondary sources. The key issues that this framework tries to address with these questions could therefore at least partially be answered by compiling and studying existing analyses. However, this is just a generic indication. It is the eventual users of the instrument that should assess at the start of the exercise whether certain areas included in the first group of questions may not be sufficiently explored by the available literature.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

Political-historical context

How has the state's history (colonization/conquest/civil war victory?) shaped whether there is a sense of political community?[2]

How has it shaped the realities and perceptions concerning the access of different groups to political and economic power?

Which actors/societal groups have historically defined the main characteristics of the existing social contract?

Which actors/societal groups have been historically excluded from the political decision-making process and thus from the bargaining involved in the shaping of a country-wide social contract?

Social stratification

What is the make-up of the population in terms of religion, caste and ethnicity/race?

Are there distinct traditional social strata related to ethnicity/race, tribe, religion, caste, class, gender, or other social divisions that are politically or economically significant?

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[2] A political community can be defined as "a context within which human beings care for themselves and for each other as social beings" (X. Marquez, 2008, "Models of Political Community: The Nation-State and Other Stories", paper presented at the meeting of the Association for Legal and Social Philosophy, Nottingham, England, p. 6). A principle of collective solidarity underpins the concept of political community, and it is often used in contraposition to self-centred individualism. While there are multiple models of political community, the dominant one has become the nation-state.

Are these strata more accentuated in some parts of the country than in others?

Has this social stratification had an historic impact on the control of political and public administration posts?

To what extent and in what different ways have these social strata affected/do they affect the abilities, opportunities, and incentives of young men and women to participate in the country's political, electoral, and economic processes?

Is there a political or economic class in the country that is overtly resistant to progressive change and reforms, thereby precluding the youth from enjoying fair opportunities for their self-realization? Or does it promote a kind of change that is primarily beneficial to itself and not necessarily to the youth, e.g. by pushing for education and career pathways meant to fill gaps in the market with cheap labour, such as in digital technologies, security services and call centres?

Are there clear and widespread instances of discrimination, exclusion, or persecution in society (against minorities), based on faith, ethnicity, caste, language, ideological or political orientations, etc.?

Sources of revenue

Have there been long-lasting fundamental disputes about different societal groups' access to natural resource rents/other revenues?

What has traditionally been the geographic and vertical reach of the country's tax collection authorities?

Have there been historical disputes about the legitimacy of the tax collection system across the country, and of the related revenue redistribution system to different subnational administrative units/regions, or through more generic mechanisms such as public sector investments, pension schemes and social safety net provisions?

The political marketplace

How do youth assess the country's political marketplace, i.e. the openness of its electoral system?

To what extent are ordinary people able to vote, join political parties or access other means to exert political influence?

Are particular groups excluded (legally, or in practice)?

What is the extent of freedom of expression in the country, especially for the youth?

What is the perceived level of corruption in formal institutions and how does it impact on the state's capacity to respond to collective needs and preferences?

Of more specific concern to the youth, are there particular dimensions of corruption that affect young people, e.g. that limit admission to better secondary schools and universities and access to early rungs of career ladders? And in a different vein, are payments to promote upward mobility through marriage considered to be an acceptable custom?

The social contract

Can the existing social contract be defined as <u>inclusive</u> or <u>extractive</u>?[3]

Is it geared towards benefitting the broad population or a select few?

How do youth assess the state's <u>capacity</u> to deliver services and protection?

How do youth assess the state's <u>legitimacy</u> in terms of political participation?[4]

What specific features of state agencies and policies promote or discourage citizens' <u>consent to the state's authority</u>? On which categories or groups of citizens do these agencies and policies focus?

Is there a <u>social contract</u> for the youth?

What are or should be the <u>key components</u> of a social contract for the youth?

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[3] According to Cloutier, "an inclusive social contract would involve fairness of opportunity and an important level of socio-economic mobility for the general population. The ways a social contract could be extractive is through corruption, clientelism and barriers to entry (in business or in politics) or through social exclusion of certain minorities. An extractive social contract would exhibit … rent extraction and extractive institutions" (M. Cloutier, 2021, "Social Contracts in Sub-Saharan Africa: Concepts and Measurements", Policy Research Working Paper No. 9788, Washington DC, World Bank, p. 13).

[4] A broad understanding of the concept of political participation should also include the state's transparency, responsiveness, impartiality and inclusiveness.

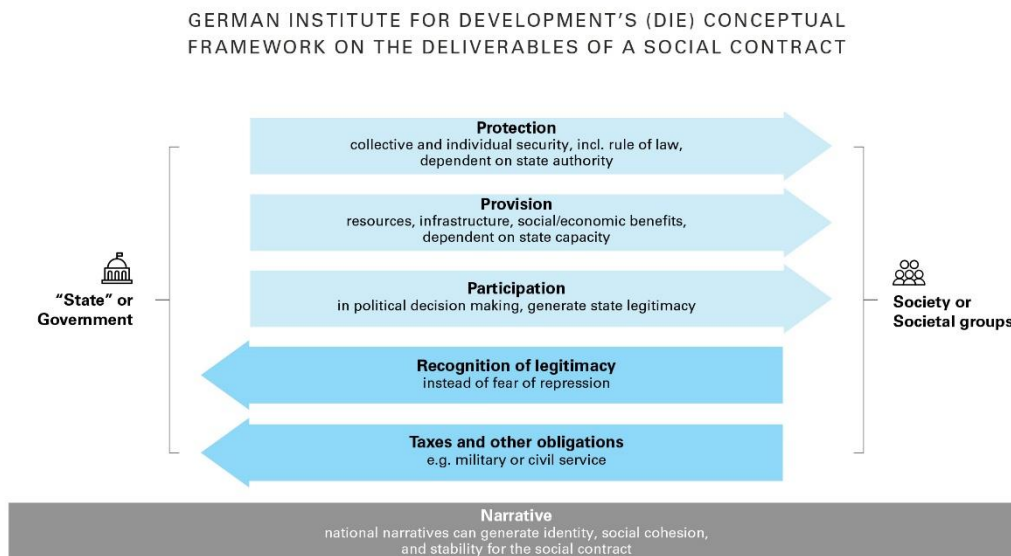## II. Specific Characteristics of a Social Contract

This second set of clustered questions aims at exploring the specific characteristics of a country's social contract and the position of youth in it, including their perceptions and broad expectations.

It starts with two more generic clusters of questions about state-society relations and the political system, and then focuses on those substantive dimensions that are assumed to be underpinning the social contract. This is about, on the one hand, key deliverables by the state and, on the other hand, obligations, legitimization, and constructive engagement that the state expects in return from its citizens.

In addition to the five main types of state-citizen interactions exemplified in Figure 1, this second set of questions also includes a few other clusters that aim at further unpacking these interactions.

Finally, it presents a separate subsection of questions that looks at broad trends, particularly those that have the greatest potential impact on social contract dynamics.

Figure 1

GERMAN INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT'S (DIE) CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON THE DELIVERABLES OF A SOCIAL CONTRACT

Protection
collective and individual security, incl. rule of law, dependent on state authority

Provision
resources, infrastructure, social/economic benefits, dependent on state capacity

Participation
in political decision making, generate state legitimacy

Recognition of legitimacy
instead of fear of repression

Taxes and other obligations
e.g. military or civil service

"State" or Government

Society or Societal groups

Narrative
national narratives can generate identity, social cohesion, and stability for the social contract

Source: Adapted from Loewe, M., Zintl T., & Houdret, A. (2021). The social contract as a tool of analysis: Introduction to the special issue on "Framing the evolution of new social contracts in Middle Eastern and North African countries". World Development 145:1-16. See Fig. 2 on page 7.

Source: M. Mezzera, "Peace Processes and Social Contracts: How Are They Linked and Where Do Children, Youth and Future Generations Fit In?", Issue Brief, New York, UNICEF, September 2022, p. 5.

State-society relations

Are state-society relations highly polarized (e.g. around ethnicity or ideology/religion), and what role do youth play in this polarization? How do they experience it?

Do interest groups make demands based on ethnicity or other exclusive criteria, or on the basis of universal rights?

Are state-society relations largely shaped by the operation of personalized networks (and expectations of individual patronage benefits), or more through engagement on "public goods" issues around which broader groups of citizens organize themselves?

The political system

Do youth see any purpose in participating in an electoral contest either as candidates or voters?[5]

Do they consider the playing ground in elections to be fairly even?

What is the perception of the current political system? Does it work, or does it need a substantial overhaul?

Are other political systems regarded as potentially more effective for the country's kind of social system and composition?

Is there a perception that the political system allows for institutional reforms, especially to address youth's concerns and demands?

State capacity[6]

Does the state have sufficient capacity to meet the expectations and needs of citizens, and especially of youth (e.g. for security, basic service delivery, etc.)?

Is there a (perceived) issue of educational inequality, e.g. in terms of gender-based (lack of) access, or regional inequity in education spending?

The constitution: Are specific provisions embedded in the constitution that address the needs, fundamental freedoms, and rights of youth and future generations?

Political community: Are youth's and future generations' rights safeguarded by law?

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[5] This question is meant to assess whether there is a (growing) disconnect between youth's expectations and the actual delivery of a country's political/electoral system. That is, do youth think their vote can make a difference, or do they believe that the outcome of elections is either tampered with or is the expression of predetermined arrangements agreed among power holders?

[6] That is, state capacity to mobilize and provide society with equitable access to resources, services, infrastructure, social benefits and economic opportunities (See M. Loewe, T. Zintl and A. Houdret, 2021, "The Social Contract as a Tool of Analysis: Introduction", in the special issue on "Framing the Evolution of New Social Contracts in Middle Eastern and North African Countries", *World Development*, Vol. 145, pp. 1-16, Figure 2, p. 7).

Has the country recently formulated a "national development plan", and if so, have youth been given a legitimate place in its formulation?[7]

Which government ministry (if any) carries special responsibility for youth affairs? How relevant is its mandate, and how effective is it at discharging this mandate?

Local governance: What is youth's perception of local governance in the country? Do they see local bodies as being responsive to their needs and demands? What level of access do they feel they have to such local governance institutions, and what level of accountability governs these institutions?

What is the nature of their relationship with customary local bodies? Are these bodies relevant and responsive to youth's demands?

What is youth's relationship to civil society in the country? Do they consider it as a viable alternative to the state, especially in terms of the provision of fundamental services?

Economic opportunities[8]

Is there a sense that economic advancement and opportunities for youth are mainly determined by merit?

If not, what other factors play a dominant role?

Does the state provide enough employment and career opportunities for the youth?

What is the level and extent of youth's access to land and credit facilities? Are these relevant matters for the country's youth?

Are there socio-economic inequalities and unfulfilled expectations related to the exploitation of natural resources, particularly among local youth?

Do youth look at the private sector as a viable alternative to the state in terms of the delivery of key services and opportunities?

Protection and security[9]

What is youth's perception of security in the country?

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[7] This question could also be listed under the heading "Youth participation". It has been placed here to emphasize its role as a potential indicator of state capacity in terms of providing an appropriate institutional framework for its citizens. However, if relevant, the same question could also be approached from a participatory perspective, i.e. it would be important to understand whether and how youth has been involved in the formulation of such a national development plan.

[8] This thematic cluster could be considered as a subcluster of the previous one (i.e. "State capacity"), because the provision of economic opportunities to its citizens can be regarded as a key responsibility of a properly functioning state.

[9] Seen as "collective and individual security, including the rule of law". This kind of protection is "dependent on state authority" (Loewe, Zintl and Houdret, 2021, p. 7).

Do they feel that state institutions can guarantee a sufficiently secure environment in which they can try to achieve their full potential?

To what extent do young people regard the military, police and judicial system as sources of security for them? Or as sources of insecurity and danger?

Do they feel that a functioning legal framework is in place that provides for civilian oversight of security sector agencies?

Are transitional justice[10] mechanisms in place that specifically address youth's concerns, grievances and traumas?

Youth participation and representation[11]

What is the perception among youth of their chances of participating effectively in decision-making at the local and national levels?

In what ways do the government and youth interact, e.g. in deciding the budget, public works etc.?

Are consultative and participatory mechanisms formally embedded in the political system at the local and/or national level, through which youth feel a legitimate sense of political participation and empowerment in shaping the country's social contract?

Have youth recently been involved in a "national dialogue" exercise?

What about "subnational arrangements"? Have youth been involved in their formulation?

How is the budget for the country's political subdivisions determined, and are there opportunities for youth to participate in this kind of local/provincial budgeting?

Social mobility: What is youth's perception of their opportunities for social advancement? Do they feel the presence of an elite group controlling these opportunities? Do they see restricted access as also being determined by geographic, religious or ethnic differences?

Do youth feel that they have the capacity to present a united front and to mobilize, to make demands to the state and to hold it accountable for its commitments?

Are students at universities organized in unions or other bodies that represent their political interests?

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[10] "Transitional justice" is seen as a restorative approach that aims to deal fairly and effectively with the legacy of widespread or systemic human rights abuses as a country moves from conflict and oppression towards peace and democracy.

[11] Generating state legitimacy.

Freedom of expression[12]

Is <u>critique of the state</u> allowed/tolerated, or is it considered as being against the national interests?

Is <u>protest</u> regarded as a legitimate route for youth to express their frustrations about the political system? If not, how can youth express their frustrations other than through the electoral system?

What is youth's perception of the country's <u>media</u>, and of their role in highlighting the youth's voices and issues? Do they see them as credible? Are there relevant differences between national and local media outlets in terms of transparency and accuracy of reporting?

Recognition of legitimacy[13]

What is youth's degree of <u>confidence in formal institutions</u> (government, parliament, political parties) at the national and local levels?

What is youth's perception of and level of confidence in the <u>judiciary and the courts</u>? Are these institutions perceived as fair or unfair, especially with regard to youth's rights and concerns?

What about the role of "<u>customary</u>" mediation/arbitration <u>bodies</u>? How do youth perceive them? Do they look at these parallel justice systems as opportunities, or as threats to their rights and social advancement?

Youth's interaction with society[14]

What are <u>youth's key relationships</u> in the existing social contract with other societal groups?

What is youth's relationship to <u>religious actors</u>? Do they see them as potential agents of progressive change, or as enforcers of conservative structures?

What is youth's position on <u>cultural diversity</u> and/or homogenization?

Do <u>faith and ethnicity/race</u> play a prominent role in informing perspectives and behaviours among youth?

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[12] This topic and its related questions could also be regarded as an extension of the "Youth participation and representation" cluster. Alternatively, they could fall under the "Protection and security" cluster of questions, because freedom of expression can also be used as an indication of the existence of a level of legal security that allows for fundamental human and civil rights.

[13] This cluster of questions aims at determining the level of confidence, if not trust, that members of society, and especially youth, have in their governing authorities. Together with society's willingness to show accountability for its own actions towards the state and to contribute to the state's existence through agreed obligations or voluntary deeds, this cluster represents the other side of the dynamic interaction between state and society that eventually leads to a social contract. In this case, the questions look at how society and youth fulfil their parts in the deal by either accepting and recognizing the state's legitimacy, or by demonstrating their support to it through concrete acts of collective relevance.

[14] This cluster of questions aims at assessing how youth relate to and interact with other potentially relevant actors, besides the state itself. Youth's own position and role in society, and thus in the social contract, will often depend on their relationships with other societal groups.

What is youth's perception of <u>armed non-state actors</u>? Do they see them as potential agents of change representing legitimate grievances, or as regressive and destabilizing forces?

Have youth the potential to act as a bridge among other societal groups by mending fault lines; bridging economic, political and cultural inequities between different groups; and opposing discrimination in public services delivery?

External actors[15]

What are the challenges and risks of <u>outside actors</u> intervening on issues and dynamics relevant to the country's social contract?

How might such an intervention harm the construction or the sustainability of the social contract (e.g. distrust, perceived bias, or the dependency of the local government on outside actors)?

What is youth's perception of <u>regional and international actors</u> (governmental, non-governmental and private sector) and of their role in influencing the national political and social landscape? To what extent and in what ways do youth see them as potential agents of progressive change, or as supporters of a repressive political system?

Key trends[16]

Socio-economic: Are <u>new technologies</u> (communication, ICT) opening up new levels of awareness and opportunities for youth, both politically and economically?

Is <u>education</u> slowly changing the balance of power in a society?

What kind of current <u>economic trends</u> do youth consider to be most threatening to their future (e.g. inflation)?

Government performance: Are <u>domestic political trends</u> affecting the rules of the game and youth's expectations in terms of open political participation and service delivery?

Does the state have a <u>long-term vision</u> for the youth that could form the basis of a new social contract with young people, setting out what they can expect from the state and what the state expects them to deliver in return?

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[15] Regional and international actors (governmental, non-governmental and private sector) exert myriad pressures and influences on national and local settings. It is important to identify "who is doing what", the partnerships and interactions involved, and their potential impact on the dynamics of a country's social contract, especially for the youth.

[16] This separate subsection is important because "a framework trying to understand social contracts needs to consider how the elements evolve over time" (Cloutier, 2021, p. 11). It looks at some of the key factors identified above and considers how they change over time. Its purpose is to discern any broad trends, particularly those that will have the greatest potential impact on the social contract dynamics. The focus here is on medium-term dynamics of change that may have an impact on the rules of the game – either positively in terms of state-society relations or negatively in terms of instability. In all cases it is necessary to consider the different ways in which these trends are affecting young men and women.

Demographics: How is the demography of the country expected to change over the next 30 years, and how will it specifically impact on youth and their position in society?

Is there a "youth bulge" in the population of the country in question? If so, how is it projected to develop?

Are there large-scale forced or voluntary <u>population movements</u> within or to/from the country? Have these movements put a major strain on public finances, service delivery (by the government or NGOs), and aid resources and delivery? Have they affected some parts of the country more than others?

Is there an <u>urbanization</u> trend in the country, and how is it impacting on the youth? Across a range of urban policies, what specific concrete cases illustrate government (national, provincial, local) responsiveness (or lack of it) to young people? (Think: housing, air quality, low-cost mobility, the promotion of culture by and for youth).

Are young urban people enjoying different levels of economic well-being and/or showing different political and economic attitudes/behaviours compared to their parents?

Geostrategic dynamics and external actors: Are changes in the <u>regional security environment</u> affecting the extent to which the government shares power with the military?

Is the nature of external influences on the country changing?

Are new actors gaining influence?

What are the expected consequences of these changes for the country's youth?

III. CURRENT YOUTH CONCERNS AND EXPECTATIONS

This third set of clustered questions focuses on the micro and short-term level, i.e. on the immediate concerns of individual youth members of a society, and on their interactions with or expectations of a particular kind of social contract.

The issues addressed here are fluid in the short term and are expected to have an impact on the social contract in the same timeframe. They have been tentatively clustered in terms of the same dimensions used in the previous section. They include issues of state capacities and the provision of services to the youth. They also include questions about opportunities and modalities for the youth to play an active role in unfolding political and economic events. Finally, the questions also touch upon previously considered matters of security (in a comprehensive way), and of the state's legitimacy in the eyes of the youth.

This section should focus on a concise analysis of these issues and actors (rather than merely a description of them). Its purpose is to help identify both present and potential triggers of deterioration and positive change in a country's social contract.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

State capacity

What services are currently the most needed by young members of society?

How easy and fair/equitable is access to secondary and higher education?

What economic activities are of specific interest to the youth that could benefit from better assistance and regulation by the state? (e.g. artisanal mining in Mozambique, which is carried out mainly by youth).

Are mechanisms in place through which the state can help young people to reach their economic potential?

What do youth see as priority actions by government to improve their economic security/well-being in a context of rising prices?

Youth participation and representation

Which youth groups have the capacity to act and the power to make their voices heard?

Do these groups have interests that overlap – actually or potentially?

Has the country's youth recently joined political and/or social protests as a way to express their frustrations beyond the ballot box? And if so, what is the nature of these frustrations?

Do youth think that they can influence the country's future? Are there concrete and specific cases in which youth have improved (or worsened) state responsiveness to their concerns?

What are the different experiences and needs of young men and women in accessing state services and pushing for government to open up access to economic opportunities and decision-making positions?

What are the specific challenges facing young people attempting to get their concerns acknowledged and addressed?

Have there been recent opportunities for the youth to engage in processes of "participatory constitution-making"?

Is there sufficient civic space for the youth to operate in?

Are there community-based youth organizations in the country that can provide an alternative path to social change and resilience?

Protection and security

Have there been recent episodes of violence or natural disasters in the country that have impacted on the youth's sense of security and stability?

Do they feel that the state could have done more to prevent or mitigate these episodes?

Recognition of legitimacy

What are the youth's views about the next elections?

CONCLUSIONS

As previously pointed out, this analytical framework should be approached by all potential users as a menu from which they can choose appropriate issues on which to focus. Despite aiming at including all the main relevant issues and related questions for a correct understanding of the social contract's (or contracts') varying complexities, this tool is intended as a living document. As such, its users should remain alert to possible shortcomings or gaps in the analytical perspectives, and are invited to insert any relevant dimensions that they feel are missing.

Due to its very nature, which aims at providing the basis for a baseline analysis that is sufficiently wide to address most of the social contract contexts in a comprehensive way, this instrument will without doubt encounter situations where certain key dimensions of a particular social contract will be insufficiently highlighted.